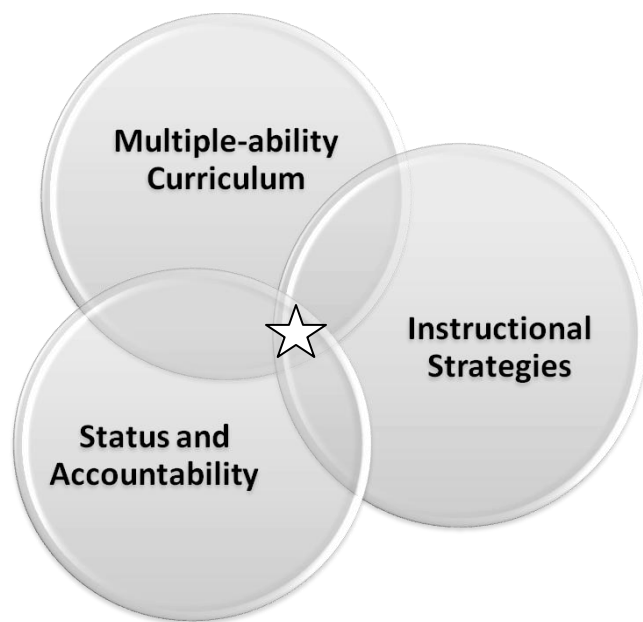


What is Complex Instruction?

Complex instruction (CI) is a combination of pedagogical strategies used to create a classroom “social system” that directly attends to problems of social inequality which undermine academic access and achievement if left unexamined. The complex instruction model aims to “disrupt typical hierarchies of who is ‘smart’ and who is not” (Sapon-Shevin, 2004) and promotes equal-status interactions amongst students as they engage with tasks that have high cognitive demand within a cooperative learning environment. In particular, complex instruction addresses the central features of classrooms: curriculum, instruction, and classroom organization, which can construct failure for students or alternately change the situation so that more students are academically successful.

There are three principles of complex instruction, that when simultaneously enacted, support equitable participation and increase student understanding. These three principles are (1) a multi-ability curriculum, (2) instructional strategies and (3) status and accountability.



Multiple-ability Curriculum: Provide curricular activities that are open-ended, rich in multiple abilities, and provide opportunities to learn important mathematical concepts and skills central to a big idea.

Instructional Strategies: Develop autonomy and interdependence of each group by using, modelling and holding students accountable to the norms and roles.

Status and Accountability: Raise intellectual expectations for all students, hold individuals and small groups accountable for participation and learning, and intervene in status issues.

References

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